

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims replaces all prior listings, and prior versions, of the claims.

Listing of Claims:

1 - 10. (cancelled)

11. (currently amended) A linking element for a spinal fixation system designed to link at least two implantable connecting assemblies, wherein said element comprises at least partly of a support made of polymer material, a rod substantially coaxial with said support, a spring being formed of a plurality of turns surrounding the rod, said support being cylindrical or tubular in shape and having an inner diameter, said turns having an inner diameter which forms a cylindrical space in which said rod is positioned and an external diameter which is greater than said inner diameter of said support resulting in said turns being at least partly embedded in the polymer material of said support.

12. (cancelled)

13. (previously presented) The linking element according to claim 11, wherein the spring is a helical spring having an axis substantially parallel with an axis of said support.

14. (previously presented) The linking element as claimed in claim 13, wherein said rod is substantially coaxial with said spring.

15. (previously presented) The linking element as claimed in claim 13, wherein said rod has an external diameter smaller than the internal diameter of said turns.

16. (previously presented) The linking element as claimed in claim 11, wherein said element further comprises a straight or curved stiffening element.

17. (previously presented) The linking element as claimed in claim 16, wherein said stiffening element is composed of a sheet of material with a substantially U-shaped cross section.

18. (currently amended) A spinal fixation system comprising at least two implantable connecting assemblies linked by at least one linking element, said at least one linking element comprising at least partly of a support made of polymer

material, a rod substantially coaxial with said support, a spring being formed of a plurality of turns surrounding rod, said support being cylindrical or tubular in shape and having an inner diameter, said turns having an inner diameter which forms a cylindrical space in which said rod is positioned and an external diameter which is greater than said inner diameter of said support resulting in said turns being at least partly ~~embedded~~ enclosed in said polymer material of said support.

19. (previously presented) The spinal fixation system as claimed in claim 18, further comprising a stiffening element fixed at least to the two implantable connecting assemblies.

20. (previously presented) The spinal fixation system as claimed in claim 18, further comprising at least one rigid linking element.

21. (previously presented) The spinal fixation system as claimed in claim 18, wherein each said implantable connecting assembly has a fork shaped head with two lateral arms delimiting a space for receiving a respective linking element and a closure piece with a U-shape, two arms, and an internal thread for receiving a locking screw.

22. (previously presented) The spinal fixation system as claimed in claim 21, wherein said lateral arms of said fork shaped head have arc shaped shoulders with an inclined upper surface and said closure piece has complementary guide means for cooperating with said arc shaped shoulders when the closure piece is engaged on said head.

23. (previously presented) The linking element as claimed in claim 11, wherein said rod is curved.

24. (previously presented) The linking element as claimed in claim 11, wherein said rod is straight.

25. (new) The linking element as claimed in claim 11, wherein said rod is at least coextensive with said support, and said spring is at least coextensive with said support.

26. (new) The spinal fixation system as claimed in claim 18, wherein said rod is at least coextensive with said support and said spring is at least coextensive with said support.